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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 003396

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PINS](#) [SOCI](#) [ES](#) [ACCELERATED DEPORTATION](#)

SUBJECT: EXPEDITED DEPORTATIONS MAY NOT INITIALLY DISSUADE
ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM EL SALVADOR

Classified By: CDA MICHAEL A. BUTLER FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) & (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Expedited deportations may not initially dissuade illegal immigration from El Salvador. Approximately half of all illegal entry attempts are successful, which provides sufficient incentive for Salvadorans to make attempts and reattempts. In addition, many Salvadorans must secure jobs in the U.S. in order to repay loans acquired to hire smugglers. Finally, El Salvador's close proximity to the U.S. enables first time migrants and prior deportees to attempt or reattempt illegal entries with relative ease. This close proximity will likely preclude the type of immediate success we have had recently with Brazilian illegal immigrants. Nonetheless, a well-planned expedited deportations plan should begin to have a mid-term impact in slowing down the Salvadoran pipeline. All indications are that the GOES will cooperate with us on such a plan, which will be necessary for the plan's eventual success. End Summary.

2. (C) The Department of Homeland Security recently announced its intention to end the "catch and release" of immigration violators detained at the border. A new program entitled the Secure Borders Initiative (SBI) aims to deport one-hundred percent of border detainees. This shift in policy is part of a larger initiative to demonstrate that we can secure our borders. At issue is whether SBI will instantly dissuade first time migrants and prior deportees from attempting to enter the United States illegally.

3. (C) In fiscal year 2005, Customs and Border Protection officers captured approximately one million persons attempting to illegally enter the United States. Many of these individuals had been apprehended previously for the same offense. During the same period, however, DHS acknowledges an estimated 800,000 illegal immigrants successfully reached the interior of our country. Roughly stated, half of those attempting to immigrate to the United States are successful. This fact alone is sufficient incentive for Salvadorans -- first time migrants and prior deportees -- to attempt or reattempt to enter our country illegally. Complicating the issue of access is the fact that, as recently noted in the UNDP Human Development Report, Salvadorans living in the U.S. earn salaries six times that of their countrymen back home. In the short term, it is doubtful that the threat of being instantly deported will deter intending immigrants from El Salvador.

4. (C) Moreover, there are other compelling motivations for deportees to try again. Many migrants employ smugglers to safely guide them across the border and into the interior of our country. Salvadoran smugglers charge between USD \$5-8 thousand for their services. Almost all migrants must borrow the money to pay this fee. If the money is borrowed from family and friends, the migrant is expected to pay off the loan after finding employment in the U.S. If it is borrowed from a loan shark, the money is due by a certain date, regardless of whether the migrant's attempt was successful. Even if the repayment of debt is not an issue, the deportee is another mouth to feed and must compete with the local populace and other returning migrants for the limited amount of jobs that pay a living wage. For most, this is why they left El Salvador in the first place.

5. (C) In addition to being sufficiently motivated to immigrate, Salvadorans have the good fortune of close proximity to their target. An immigration agreement between their countries permits all Central Americans to travel freely to Mexico's border with Guatemala. Much of the border is unguarded and can be easily crossed. Arranging transportation to the U.S. border is not difficult. From there, migrants can hire Mexican smugglers or cross the border on their own.

6. C) The success of SBI depends in part on creating a financial disincentive to immigrate. If caught and deported, the migrant loses the money invested in his migration. This can be substantial if he employed a smuggler. This disincentive can be mitigated, however, with a change in "business" practices. It is widely known that "legitimate" Mexican smugglers charge for a successful border crossing, not just for the attempt. One real possibility is that smugglers will start offering an additional crossing without charge to their "clients" who were caught and deported before

reaching the interior of the United States. Once SBI begins to produce substantial and instantaneous deportations, Salvadoran smugglers may also adopt this practice, thereby diminishing the financial disincentive created by SBI.

17. (C) COMMENT: Post realizes that the objective of SBI is to demonstrate that we can control our borders. In the mid- to long-term, an expanded border patrol presence and sanctions against employers hiring undocumented workers will lead to decreased illegal immigration as potential migrants see limited opportunities to successfully cross the border and find gainful employment. In the short term, however, it remains unclear if SBI -- expedited deportations of one hundred percent of illegal aliens detained at the border -- will substantially impact the presently massive illegal immigration from El Salvador. Despite the setback to those caught and deported, there remain strong incentives for Salvadorans to continue attempting illegal entries until they are successful in reaching the interior of our country. Nonetheless, a well-planned expedited deportations plan should begin to slow down the Salvadoran illegal pipeline in the mid-term. The GOES has given every indication that it wants to cooperate with us, a necessary condition for eventual success.
Butler